MECHANICAL PROBLEMS

Mechanical problems create both uncertainty and danger for the rider. In the event of a mechanical breakdown, it is imperative that the rider remain focused on traffic conditions and the road ahead. The following are guidelines which may assist the rider in handling a mechanical emergency safely.

TIRE FAILURE & BLOWOUTS

Tire failure and blowouts pose a serious risk of injury to the rider and fellow motorists. Poor handling and stability are often reliable indicators of tire failure. Experienced riders who recognize these signs are able to react quickly to the situation. Riders experiencing such difficulty should avoid sudden braking and immediately pull off to the side of the road to check for tire failure.

Front and rear tire failures must be treated differently. Front tire failure is particularly dangerous for it affects cycle steering and control. For riders experiencing front tire failure, it is recommended that the rider shift his or her weight to the rear of the motorcycle for added balance and stability. Rear tire failure may cause the cycle to swerve harshly form side to side. For riders experiencing rear tire failure, it is recommended that the rider remain seated with no weight shift to either the front or rear of the cycle.

Should either tire go flat while riding, hold the handle grips firmly and attempt to maintain a straight course of travel. Presuming you are able to identify the failure, gradually apply the brake to the tire which has not failed. As the cycle begins to slow, cautiously move towards the edge of the roadway where it is safe to stop.

STUCK THROTTLE

A stuck throttle on a motorcycle may be remedied by twisting the throttle back and forth several times. This twisting may free the throttle cable and allow the operator to regain engine control. If the rider is unable to free the throttle, it is recommended that the rider activate the engine cut-off switch while holding in the cycle's clutch. This action will remove power from the cycle's rear wheel, allowing the rider to safely regain control. Once safely stopped, the rider should check the throttle cable carefully to locate the source of trouble. A good rider will ensure that the throttle is working properly before continuing to ride.

WOBBLE

A situation may arise when the front wheel of the motorcycle and handlebars suddenly start to shake from side to side. This action can be described as "wobble" and is most often attributable to improper loading, unsuitable cycle accessories, or incorrect tire pressure. Some common causes are loose wheel bearings and spokes, bent or mis-aligned wheels, windshields or farings improperly mounted or unsuitable for the cycle, improper weight distribution, and overloading.

Attempting to accelerate out of a wobble will only make the cycle more unstable. A rider can safely manage wobble by grasping the handlegrips firmly and slowly, and closing the throttle to reduce cycle speed. Riders are discouraged from applying the brakes, as braking could make the wobble worse. Shifting rider weight as far forward and down as possible will lessen the vibration and enable the rider to regain sufficient control. The rider should safely stop the cycle and attempt to identify the wobble, making load shifts and mechanical adjustments as necessary. If the rider is unable to determine the cause of the wobble, have the motorcycle inspected thoroughly by a qualified professional motorcycle mechanic.

CHAIN PROBLEMS

A motorcycle chain that slips or breaks while riding may cause the rear wheel of the cycle to lock and skid, endangering the rider. The rider may first notice slippage when either accelerating quickly or riding uphill. Tightening the chain may initially help to reduce the slippage. If the problem persists, inspect for a worn or stretched chain or bent sprockets, which may necessitate chain replacement.

A rider will recognize a chain break due to the instant loss of power to the cycle's rear wheel. If this situation should arise, roll off and close the throttle while gently braking to a safe stop at the road's edge. Chain slippage or breakage can be avoided through routine and proper maintenance.

ENGINE SEIZURE

An engine and its moving parts require oil and lubricants to move smoothly. Without the proper lubricants, moving parts cannot move freely, thereby creating friction which may cause the engine to overheat and seize. Engine seizures are most often attributable to low oil pressure. To avoid engine seizures, riders should routinely check the cycle's oil and lubricant reservoirs to ensure they are sufficiently full. Should the engine seize while riding, riders are instructed to squeeze and hold the clutch lever to disengage the engine from the rear wheel. Once the cycle has safely come to a stop, stand away from the cycle and let the engine cool before attempting to restart.